

Customer Collaboration: Utility Bill Relief Initiatives

Electric Utility Commission

Kerry Overton

Chief Customer Officer, Austin Energy



June 8, 2020

© 2018 Austin Energy

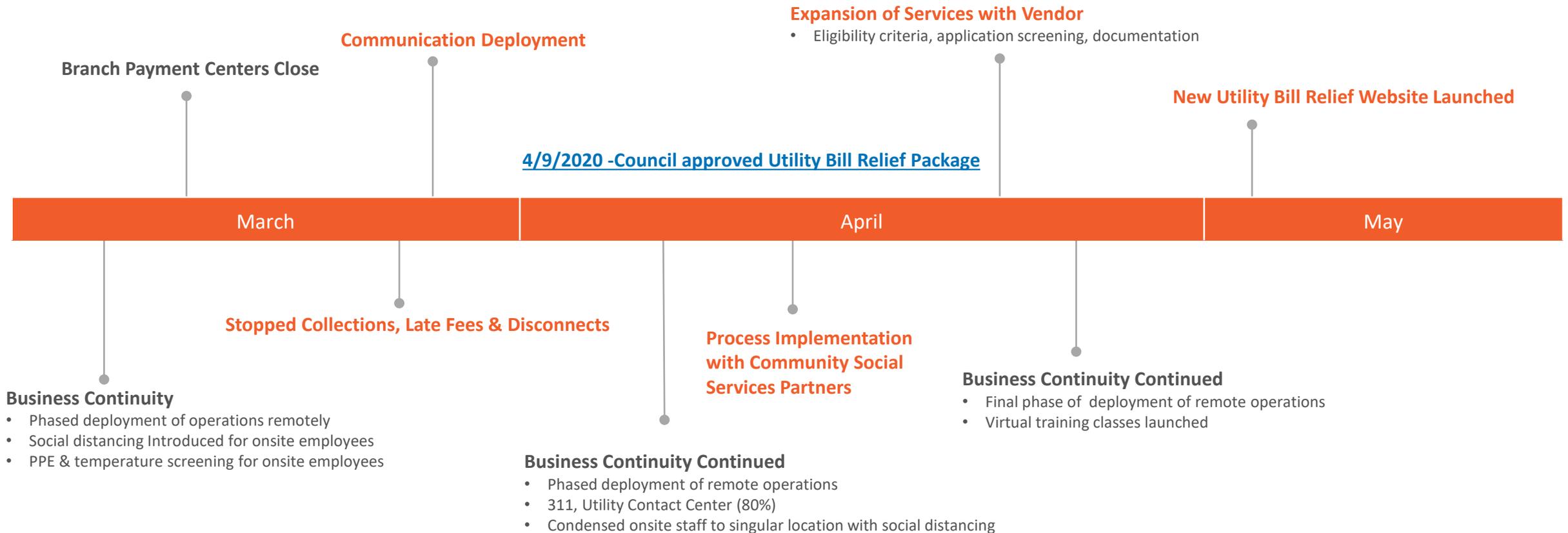
Agenda

- Overview
- Customer Care COVID-19 Response
- Communications Strategy
- Utility Bill Relief Funding
- Customer & Community Outreach



***To request utility bill assistance go to www.austinbillhelp.com**

Customer Care COVID-19 Response



Communications Strategy



4/9/2020- Council Approved Utility Bill Relief Package

Customer outreach campaigns:

- Outbound calls to disconnected customers
- Emails promoting suspended disconnections & late fees
- Changes made to Collections Letters
- Social Media messaging of branch closures & alternate ways to pay

Utility Bill Relief outreach efforts:

- Emails to all customers
- Radio, print and digital ads
- Social Media Videos
- Expansion of Donate page on website
- New Plus 1 Donate flyers in English/Spanish
- IVR messaging changes

Continue outreach efforts:

- Press Releases/Media Interviews
- Spanish language and public radio
- Utility News On-Bill Messaging
- Customer Programs Campaign
- Reopen Payment Centers
- Direct letter mailouts



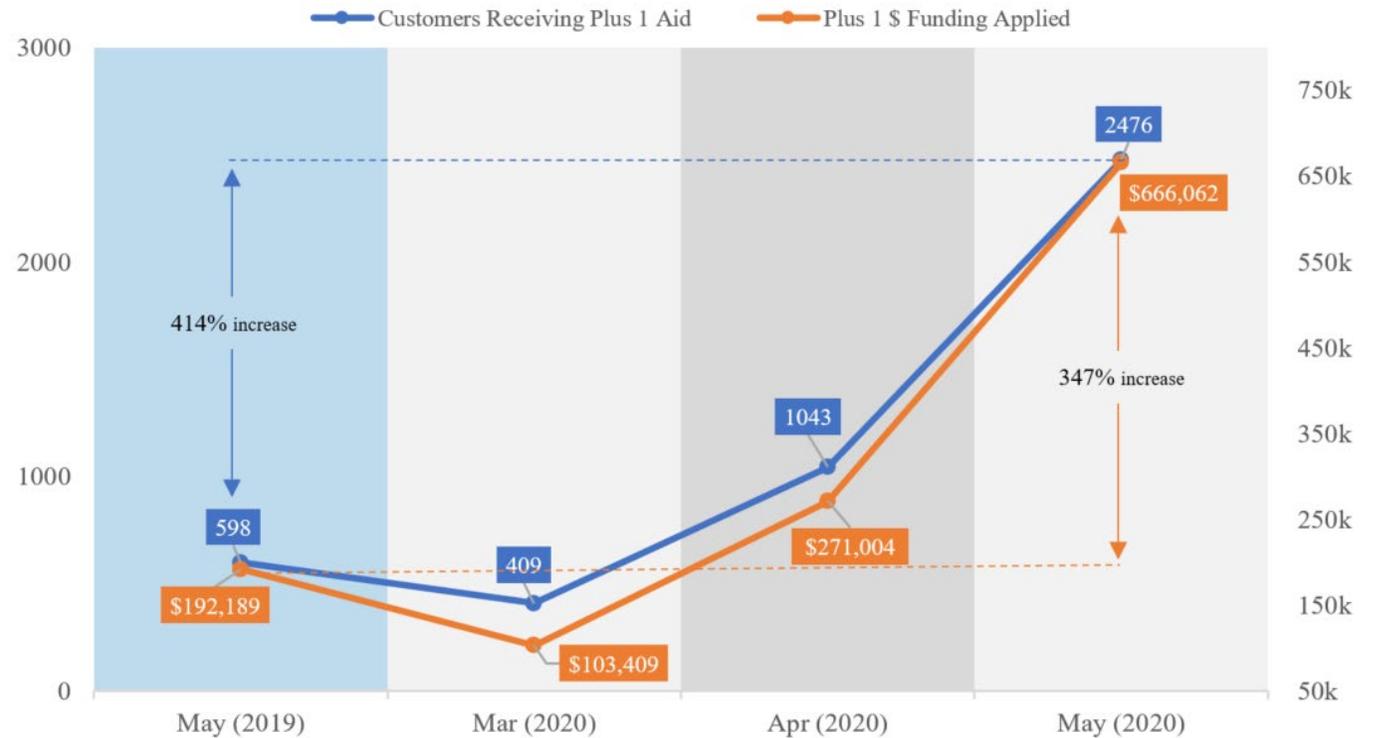
Utility Bill Relief Funding: COVID-19

As part of COA Utilities' COVID-19 response, an additional \$10M was added on April, 9, 2020, to the Plus 1 fund.

Bill Relief Funding Components

- Network of 56 community social service partners for disbursement of funds
- New COA Utilities Online application process
www.austinbillhelp.com
- Increase in the maximum funding per household
- Increase in assistance from same partners within a 12-month period
- Additional Marketing on Bill Relief Assistance via social media and direct mail

Plus 1 Financial Assistance Applied



*10% of Customers have received multiple bill relief assistance since April, 9, 2020.



Utility Bill Relief Funding: COVID-19

Customer Outreach

296,761

Emails sent to Residential customers promoting the Utility Bill Relief Package

1,045

Outbound calls made with no payments since February 2020*

17,043

Direct letters mailed to customers with a late payment for the 1st time within twelve months*

3,553

Direct letters mailed for missed payment arrangements since March 15, 2020*



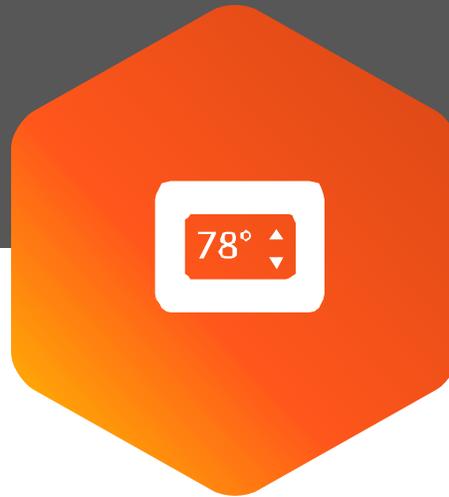
*Focused outreach efforts on customers who exhibited different than normal payment behaviors.

Continued Community Outreach: Agency Partnerships & Customer Education



Affordable Utility Summit

*Education opportunity specifically designed
for partnering agencies*



Summer Savings Campaign

*Education opportunity for energy saving
tips, water conservation, and tools and
apps to monitor usage*



Community Connections Annual Resource Fair

*Customer Assistance Program sponsored
event featuring education, services and
resources
for community*



Integration of technology to create virtual experiences in light of current events are being explored.

Thank you!

Questions?



**Customer Driven.
Community Focused.SM**



Appendix



Website Metrics Highlights

200% increase

CAP page views over the
same time in 2019

457% increase

New users on CAP pages
over the same time in 2019

6,048

Total page views on new
Utility Bill Relief page April 9
- May 27

3,351

Total new users on Utility Bill
Relief Page April 9 - May 27



Demonstrates customer interest and engagement in the timely, relevant content provided!

Utility Bill Relief Marketing

Facing Financial Hardship? We're Here to Help.

- 1. See if You Qualify for Help on Utilities:**
 - austinenergy.com/go/cap
- 2. Explore Your Options:**
 - Utility Bill Discounts
 - Emergency Financial Assistance
 - Payment Arrangement
 - Budget Billing
 - Medically Vulnerable Services
- 3. Submit Your Application:**
 - Start today at austinenergy.com/go/cap

©2020 City of Austin

Multichannel Infographic

Facing Financial Hardship? Get Help on Utilities.

[See if you qualify](#)

©2020 City of Austin

Digital Ads



¿Tiene Dificultades Financieras? Obtenga Ayuda con los Servicios Públicos.

- Descuentos en facturas de servicios públicos
- Asistencia financiera de emergencia
- Plan de pago diferido
- Plan de presupuesto
- Servicios para clientes con necesidades médicas

Vea si califica:
austinenergy.com/go/cap

City of Austin Utilities

© 2020 Ciudad de Austin

Facing Financial Hardship? Get Help With Utilities.

- Utility Bill Discounts
- Emergency Financial Assistance
- Payment Arrangement
- Budget Billing
- Medically Vulnerable Services

See if you qualify:
austinenergy.com/go/cap

City of Austin Utilities

© 2020 City of Austin

English and Spanish Print Ads

Your Safety. Your Utilities. Our Priority.

We want to keep your lights on and your water running.

The City of Austin cares about your health and safety. Smart actions can keep your utilities on and help you stay safe. Remember these tips during this time of caution:

Get help with utilities: Facing financial hardship? From utility bill discounts to budget billing, the City of Austin offers support for qualifying customers. See if you qualify: austinenergy.com/go/cap.

Continue your service: The City of Austin has stopped utility disconnects caused by non-payment. If your utilities were recently turned off because of unpaid bills, contact City of Austin Utilities **today** for a courtesy reconnection. Call **512-494-9400**.

Consider new ways to pay: For public safety reasons, the City of Austin Walk-In Utility Service Centers are currently closed. Check out other payment options by visiting austinenergy.com/go/paymentoptions or call **3-1-1** for more information.

Stop the scams: Watch for possible scams during this time. Contact us if you have any doubts about a suspicious billing call or email. Call **512-494-9400**.

While physical distancing, stay connected to your City Utilities and City Information channels. However you spend your time at home, be safe and contact us if you need utility assistance.

City of Austin Utilities

For more information, please visit austintexas.gov/COV

Video for social media

Addressed urgent need to communicate COA Utilities messaging.



Facing Financial Hardship? We're Here to Help.

1. See if You Qualify for Help on Utilities:

- austinenergy.com/go/cap

2. Explore Your Options:



- Utility Bill Discounts

- Emergency Financial Assistance



- Payment Arrangement

- Budget Billing



- Medically Vulnerable Services

3. Submit Your Application:

- Start today at austinenergy.com/go/cap

©2020 City of Austin



¿Tiene Dificultades Financieras? Estamos Aquí para Ayudar.

1. Vea si califica para recibir ayuda con servicios públicos:

- austinenergy.com/go/cap

2. Explore sus opciones:



- Descuentos en facturas de servicios públicos

- Asistencia financiera de emergencia



- Plan de pago diferido

- Plan de presupuesto



- Servicios para clientes con necesidades médicas

3. Enviar su solicitud:

- Comience hoy en austinenergy.com/go/cap

©2020 Ciudad de Austin

